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Task Force Liberty Soldiers scout desert, meet locals



Staff Sgt. Michael Deliberti, a Company C, 2/7 Inf. truck commander, gives candy to a child in a small village near Lake Tharthar. The village is very small, having a little more than 60 residents, and a place seldomly visited by Coalition Forces.

Story and Photos by Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.

1st BCT Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DAGGER, Tikrit, Iraq - Much of the land west of Baiji and Tikrit, to Lake Tharthar is open desert. Apart from a few very small villages, the only thing that can be found here is a handful of houses and farms.

Reconnaissance and control of this part of Iraq falls in the Company C, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment area of operation.

"Our mission today is to perform a search and attack out in the western desert portion of my company's sector, which is a pretty large area," said Capt. Jason Friedt, company commander. "On a rough guess, I would say it's about the size of the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, Calif."

Both Friedt and Sgt. 1st Class Robert Kloenne, platoon sergeant, said they were there to meet the people residing in this part of the country and gather intelligence on any possible insurgent activity.

"Basically we wanted to come

out here to the western desert and look for any anti-Iraqi activity, and identify any reasons why we may need to patrol out here," Kloenne said.

"We do need to patrol more often," he added. "It's been very good. We've talked to people in a few of the villages beside Lake Tharthar, and so far, they've reported that they haven't seen any suspicious activity."

Friedt explained the two reasons for stopping in the towns and talking to the residents there.

"First, it was to introduce the company to the people since we haven't been out here all that much," Friedt said. "Second, we were out here to look for some tactical intelligence. We wanted to see if the people had seen any AIF, or any foreign fighters out here training, staging or even just hiding out."

If they had any usable information, Friedt said, the Soldiers would use it to narrow their search to a smaller area.

Kloenne said since they haven't shown a presence in this part of

Iraq, it was hard to read how the people felt, but overall he said the people's reaction was positive.

"This is the first time we have been out here, so you can't really tell from past experiences what their reactions are to this presence patrol," Kloenne said. "So far it's been a very positive reaction."

Kloenne said that most of the patrol has been cross country in order to stay away from roads and avoid traffic, as the insurgents probably won't have a camp beside a main road and have a tendency to plant improvised explosive devices beside the main roads.

"If you spread out ... you're going to be able to cover and see more

ground," Friedt said.

Friedt said he felt that most of the people they talked to were pretty glad to see them.

"The fact that someone is actually coming out here, paying attention to them and asking them about their needs and their problems just makes them feel good," Friedt said.

Friedt said this patrol was the first of many the company planned to perform during the deployment. He also said he hoped that with continued friendly presence patrols, the people residing in the area would come to trust the Soldiers and eventually provide them with useful intelligence.



Sgt. James Wotherspoon, a gunner for C Co., 2/7 Inf., scans the horizon for possible anti-Iraqi activity in the desert west of Baiji, near Lake Tharthar in late March.



Maj. Gen. Joseph J. Taluto, Task Force Liberty commander, gives Lt. Col. Todd Wood, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment commander, a combat patch during a ceremony at FOB Dagger April 4.

Story and photo by Spc. Jimmy D. Lane Jr.
1st BCT Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DAGGER, Tikrit, Iraq - Soldiers of the 1st Brigade Combat Team, Task Force Liberty, held a ceremony at Forward Operating Base Dagger to receive their combat patches April

Marne and Rainbow Soldiers receive combat patch

4. The 1st BCT is a 3rd Infantry Division unit from Fort Stewart, Ga. attached to the 42nd Infantry Division of the New York Army National Guard.

Operation Iraqi Freedom 3 is not the first time Soldiers from these two divisions have fought side by side.

"The combat patches being presented today are a reminder of another point in history where the Rainbow Division and Marne Soldiers stood shoulder to shoulder on the battlefield as we do today," said Col. Mark McKnight, 1st BCT commander. "In the summer of 1918, the 42nd Infantry Division and the 3rd Infantry Division defeated the German army at the second battle of the Marne, making the turning point of the First World War."

Maj. Gen. Joseph J. Taluto, Task Force Liberty commander, presented commanders of TF Liberty and their command sergeants major with 42nd Inf. Div. combat patches.

"It is hard to believe how much a small piece of cloth can mean to a Soldier," Taluto said.

Taluto went on to explain how throughout history,

Soldiers have always been proud to don a combat patch on their shoulder as a sign of having been in a battle.

The date of the ceremony was significant because two years ago to the day the 1st BCT deposed former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

"As the sun rose over Baghdad, the regime of Saddam Hussein awoke to a new reality," McKnight said. "Their propaganda could no longer stand up to the light of that morning sun. The Raider Brigade, as the first element of the first Infantry Division, had arrived in Baghdad. We came not as conquerors but as liberators. We came to help the Iraqi people shove aside a tyrant as the Iraqis embraced freedom and liberty as if they were a long lost brother."

McKnight asked the Soldiers to be proud of the patch they were now authorized to wear and to keep Soldiers of the past in their minds.

"I would like all of you to remember one thing," McKnight said. "When you look at the combat patch you earned here today, remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country."

Coalition Forces train Iraqi Emergency Medical Technicians

Story and photo by Sgt. Matthew Acosta
22nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE WARRIOR, Kirkuk, Iraq - A new program has been developed to train Iraqi civilians in the life-saving emergency medical technician skills necessary to help the Iraqi people take charge of their nation.

In a combined effort with the U.S. State Department, Ministry of Health, the Red Crescent and the U.S. Army and Air Force, the first civilian Emergency Medical Technician or EMT program in Iraq consists of four individual classes on basic EMT skills.

At Kirkuk Regional Airbase medical staff assigned to the Air Force's 506th Expeditionary Medical Support Squadron and the Army's 145th Support Battalion and 126th Forward Surgical Team spearheaded the training of 23 handicapped Iraqi civilians in their second EMT class at the airbase.

"The purpose of this course has two main goals," said Army Capt. Jeremy Ostermiller, physician assistant and program coordinator, Company C, 145th Support Battalion, Idaho National Guard, Task Force Liberty. "One (goal) is to teach the basic EMT skills to civilians so they can treat casualties."

Ostermiller said the second goal is to have the three highest graduates from each class return as assistant instructors with the next class. Eventually the entire program will be turned over to them, with the Army and Air Force observing the program for quality control. This would establish the start of an Iraqi-lead EMT training system.

Most of the students do not have medical backgrounds and many of those selected work as security for oil fields and some are firefighters, he added.

During the two-week course, students are taught the same basic life-saving skills as taught in the nationally registered EMT course, in the United States, including cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, first aid, trauma management, intravenous injections, injury dressings, splinting, joint immobilization and childbirth procedures.

"Normally in the Arab culture, women nurses deliver babies," Ostermiller said. "But these guys showed interest in learning everything they can, including the procedures for child delivery."

Besides the cultural difference, the medical staff has had to overcome a few obstacles, he said.

"Because this is the first EMT program taught in Iraq, there are no textbooks written in Arabic available to

the students," Ostermiller said. "We have some slides with both Arabic and English translations on them now describing some procedures which help out a great deal with the language barrier."

After the training period, the students were given a 100-question written exam and a practical exam consisting of several injury stations.

"The Iraqi students were eager to take the written exam, but were more enthusiastic with taking the hands-on practical exam," said Senior Airman Melissa Wass, medical technician and instructor, 506th EMEDSS, Task Force Liberty.

"They're incredible," she added. "They learned the curriculum in two weeks, versus the normal six-week time frame we teach back in the states."

"The reason they picked it up so fast is because those with the aptitude for it were specifically identified and chosen to attend the course," said Technical Sgt. Ronald Stacy, medical technician and instructor, 506th EMEDSS,

Task Force Liberty. "They want to learn about the medical field. They want to be here and it shows."

The entire class of Iraqi EMT students graduated April 2 at Kirkuk Regional Airbase and the three honor graduates were presented with U.S. military combat life saver medical kits as a reward. They were also invited back to become assistant instructors in the next EMT class.

Wass said she enjoyed working with the Iraqis and looks forward to teaching the next class.

"I feel good knowing we're making a difference with people we normally wouldn't have been able to help," Wass said.

"This course can be likened to the saying 'give a man a fish and you'll feed him for a day. Teach him to fish and he'll feed himself for a lifetime,'" Stacy said. "I think this is the start of something really good for the people. If they grab hold of this EMT program, it's a step closer to them taking charge of the new medical field that's growing here in Iraq."



Air Force Technical Sgt. Troy Moore, Mental Health Technician and EMT instructor, 506th Expeditionary Medical Support Squadron, Task Force Liberty, watches an Iraqi EMT student splint a simulated leg fracture on a medical instruction mannequin during the final practical exercise of the class. Twenty-three students were handicapped to attend the first Emergency Medical Technician program taught to Iraqi civilians.